



**MARCH TIP SAVINGS: \$120-\$150/YR**  
**Avoided Emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>: Up to 320 lbs./YR**

## \$USTAINABILITY \$AVINGS TIP

### COMPOSTING: BREAKING IT DOWN TO THE BASICS

*Easy steps to turn green waste into mulch*

With the arrival of March, summer is just a few short months away and now is the right time to prepare plants for the hot, dry conditions ahead. Placing organic mulches or compost around your plants is one way to cool down roots, keep weeds in check, and increase water and nutrient-holding abilities for the soil. You can make your own organic mulch by composting in your own backyard. Applying mulch to plants once or twice a year can reduce plant water needs by as much as 30%, and best of all, composting diverts waste from the landfill that would produce methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

The process of composting speeds up natural decomposition to create mulch from kitchen scraps, yard clippings, and other organic materials. Compost improves your soil and is perfect for spreading around plants, flowers, or vegetables. Try these tips for turning green waste into mulch:

***Compost can reduce or eliminate the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides.***

#### COMPOSTING TIPS

1. Pick a spot to place your compost pile that is convenient for you to access and close to a water source if possible.
2. Combine 4 parts carbon-rich materials (browns) to 1 part nitrogen-rich materials (greens). Try layering different materials to speed up the process and reduce odors.  
"Browns": Sawdust, chipped branches, leaves, and straw  
"Greens": Kitchen scraps, coffee grounds, grass clippings, weed foliage, leafy trimmings
3. To aid the decomposition process, the pile needs oxygen and moisture. Turn the pile occasionally to aerate and add water to keep the materials moist but not wet.
4. Before applying to your soil, use a screen to sift out the semi-decomposed pieces if you prefer. These pieces can be returned to the compost pile to further decompose.

#### CHECKLIST FOR SAVINGS

- ☐ **To learn to make your own compost**, attend one of the monthly *Living Green* Workshop Series programs. Our March 13<sup>th</sup> program is ***Composting as Easy as One-Two***. For a list of all programs, visit [www.mesaaz.gov/sustainability](http://www.mesaaz.gov/sustainability) or call (480) 644-4400 for details.
- ☐ **For books on gardening and composting** at City of Mesa Library, visit <http://www.mesalibrary.org>.
- ☐ **Backyard compost containers** are available to Mesa residents for a \$5.00 refundable deposit, visit [www.mesarecycles.org](http://www.mesarecycles.org) for more information.
- ☐ **Steps to successful composting** and tips to recycling your kitchen waste can be found at [www.mesaaz.gov/waste/successful\\_composting.aspx](http://www.mesaaz.gov/waste/successful_composting.aspx).

#### \$START \$AVING

Start saving by composting and doing your part for *building a sustainable community*. Visit our Web site for more sustainability savings tips at [www.mesaaz.gov/sustainability](http://www.mesaaz.gov/sustainability).

*Learn to live Green*